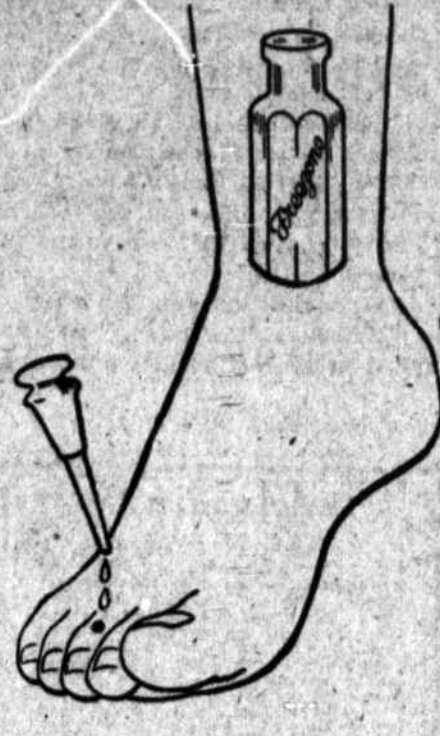


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## Diamond Dyes



Genuine  
**Aspirin**

# A Story of Love, Adventure and Weirdest Mystery

(Continued from Preceding Page)

I must add that, during the difficult days that followed, no man could have kept his word more loyally or lessened my own feeling of awkwardness more by his charm of manner, though at times I caught him unawares frowning and thinking hard with a grim puzzled look on his face. I was a delight to me and doubled our bond of friendship on my side—if possible.

## CHAPTER XII.

It was with no small pleasure that I heard Jevons say, as he took the things out of the car, that Dorothy Wolff was having tea with Ann, and I noticed Burgess's face light up almost imperceptibly, making me feel more than ever satisfied that I had not yielded to a natural temptation and laid my whole soul bare to him to his distress, rather than risk straining the friendship so dear to me.

For my own reasons I was particularly anxious to study Dorothy Wolff more closely for better, for worse, and here was the opportunity without delay.

"Ann, delightful as ever with her wonderful fair hair and white dress, ran across the hall and greeted me with her usual frank sisterly kiss, second only to the one reserved for old Burgess.

"It is good to get you back, Linc," she said. "We have missed you terribly, and Burgess hasn't known what to do with himself while I have been busy upstairs with the hospital. Where are my chocolates?"

I handed them over to her. I don't think I had missed once since she was a little girl in short frocks; and she had begun to regard them as a prescriptive right. In fact, I always used to say that I would not dare return without them.

"Chocolates, Dorothy," she said, as I greeted the girl. "Just at the psychological moment, as superior novelists say, when we have done tea. Tea, Linc, or a drink?"

"Both, please," I said, deliberately expropriating Burgess and sitting down next to Miss Wolff—"That is, tea first and the drink some time later, when I get stuffy old Burgess by himself sucking at an old pipe and grunting in an arm-chair."

They all laughed, and I had created the atmosphere I wanted. For the next few days it was imperative to keep things going and permit no brooding.

Dorothy Wolff was looking more charming than ever in the white fur cap which suited her so well, yet, at the same time, instinctively raised acute antagonism in me, and I must admit that I was very much drawn to her personality by the frankness of her eyes, her direct look which bred confidence. It gave me to think analytically, if not fustiously, as the old melodramatic tag has it, and even frankness is often a disconcerting factor. Somehow—well, we will get to that later.

"And how is the Herr Professor?" I asked, keeping the lighter vein. "I have run across one or two of my scientific friends in town, who tell me that he is a wonderful man with an alphabet of more than twenty-six inadequate letters after his name and the past-master of his own subject."

I noticed Burgess shoot an almost unconscious glance across at me, as though he suspected the fact that I had been making inquiries about the professor in town, but I went on cheerfully, as though I had seen nothing.

"I am very anxious to pursue the acquaintance, if I may, Miss Wolff, and would like to call one afternoon and have a chat with him. What is his best time? I mustn't interrupt his work on any account."

"Then come in the afternoon," said the girl naturally and cordially. "He usually goes out for a walk after lunch—or dinner, if it really is with us—and returns between three and four. So come down with Ann—and Mr. Clympling, too, if he cares to," she added a little shyly, looking across at Burgess—"and stay on to tea."

"My father is all right when he finds people there and has to talk to them, but if anyone attempts to make an appointment he always tries on his side to evade it with the instinct of a recluse, a thing which grows upon him more and more each year. So choose your own afternoon and come unexpectedly. I am sure to be in, as I go nowhere except here."

"The very few people who called soon dropped us when they found what a funny household we are and how unapproachable and irresponsible father is. Only Ann took the trouble to think of me, and be kind to me in my loneliness—and Mr. Clympling."

"That is the drawback of having a genius for a father," I said; and it seemed to me as though she were about to say something, but checked herself sharply. "They can't help having their individual-



"I am very anxious," I went on cheerfully, "to pursue the acquaintance, if I may, Miss Wolff."

ties, which spell peculiarities, and it would be a dull world if we were all turned out of the same ordinary mould, wouldn't it? I rather like eccentric people myself."

"I always regard you as a bit eccentric myself, Linc," broke in Ann chaffingly, "with your long disappearances into the unknown. I am always expecting you to turn up with one, if not more colored wives with their blankets on their backs and a long row of papooses, whatever they are. I often wonder where I should put them and what I should feed them on."

"No, never that, my dear Ann, I promise you," I answered solemnly—"any eccentricity short of matrimony either in the singular or the plural."

"I swear to you that, if ever I contemplate the greatest adventure of all I'll bring the poor creature round for your inspection and opinion first; and, more than that, unlike most futile folk in love who go through this formality, but in their egotism brook nothing but effusive approval, I'll guarantee to abide by your mature and well-balanced decision. What are your views upon the subject of marriage, Miss Wolff?"

"I haven't any, to be frank," she answered, looking at me candidly with her big solemn blue eyes. "It is a thing which has never come under my immediate notice."

"Then you are rather like old Burgess here," I said, perhaps a trifle wickedly. "He has kept well clear of the snares set for such a charming and eligible young fellow with the imperviousness of a misogynist."

"Don't be an ass, Linc," said Burgess, reddening a little, to my amusement.

Ann laughed. "Burgess has got me," she said, patting his hand with an air of ownership, "and that ought to be enough for any man."

"Perhaps it will be some day," I said, "if not too much."

"Oh, shut up, Linc, I hate you," said the girl. "Have a chocolate to keep you quiet? You are incorrigible. You have come back from town in a very bad mood. What did you do with yourself?"

"Nothing I couldn't tell you or any other nice young girl in her teens," I replied. "I went to see my lawyer and made a codicil to my will, leaving you an annuity of chocolates; and, talking of lawyers, I renewed my acquaintance with Fitzroy Manders and took him to dinner at the club, a carnal joy which appeals much more to sensible men of our age than all your unsubstantial fantasies of love and sugary sentiment."

There was nothing in our tea-table talk, as we babbled on—purposely lightly on my part; but it served my object, and gave me the chance I wanted of drawing out Dorothy Wolff and forming my own opinion of her.

Candidly it was all, more than all, in her favor. She was charmingly frank and unaffected, and nothing could lurk behind the complete candor of those solemn blue eyes. In fact, she was as unsophisticated as a child, and the real wonder was that she was so fresh and natural considering the strangeness of her surroundings.

And I felt more than ever that it was up to me to penetrate the mystery that lay behind it all—if I were not mistaken, the victim of

an hallucination of my own deliberate creation.

Then came the old question which has broken up so many happy interludes in life.

"What is the time?" the girl asked, as the grandfather clock in the hall chimed.

"A quarter to six," answered Burgess reassuringly; "but it's all right. I told Wilson to leave the car at the door and I'll drive you home, so you won't be late."

The girl gave him a grateful look, and it struck me how typical it was of Burgess's thoughtfulness of detail for others, and what a good husband he would make when the time came for me to stand beside him at the chancel rail as his best man.

Ann and I saw them off, and then I lit a cigar.

"You shall play me something nice and thoughtful and soothing, Ann," I said, "if you don't think it will disturb the hospital or reach the Bullingdon ward. It's so nice to be home."

And I settled myself down in a big chair in front of the fire and was soon deep in thought, while Ann, knowing my habits, played on by instinct just what I wanted without my realizing particularly what it was. Such music helps to coordinate thought.

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE next three days, much to Burgess's disgust—and Ann's, too, for that matter—I was busy writing. It was the document for my solicitor and, ultimately, Scotland Yard, covering the possibilities ahead and working out my theory in detail on paper.

It was difficult writing in a way, but it helped me more than I was aware of in many respects to put the thing on paper in a logical, well-elaborated fashion, giving my reasons and references, scientific and personal; and, apart from acting as a covering document in certain eventualities—a precaution, I may add, many doctors and other persons placed in strange anomalous positions would often be well advised to take—it not only relieved my mind from the point of view of regularizing the irregular as far as humanly possible, but served to convince me more than ever, in my own mind, that I had hit upon no wild fantasy, no bizarre hallucination, no lunatic theory, but the key to the weirdest and most gruesome thing that had ever befallen sedate old England in these latter days of alleged civilization, which is, after all, only the conventional veneer adopted to cover the primitive that is in us all, be it deep down or near the surface.

The conviction that I was correct, however, despite the relief of having finished my unwelcome task, left a dull weight behind it, and I blotted the last page with a heavy anxious heart, just as it was time to dress for dinner on Sunday, the third day of my self-imposed task, which Ann believed to be a dry-as-dust contribution to one of the big reviews.

Burgess, I could see, knew better, though, sportsman that he always is, he made my task easier by never saying a word, far less asking a question. I admired his splen-

offered; "and we can come back after lunch. I want to go to my tailor."

"It's awfully good of you," I answered noncommittally. "We'll talk it over later on."

But over our last cigar I told him frankly that I could not risk his being away even for the inside of a day, in case anything should happen; and he nodded without a word, perhaps not displeased in a way to think he was essential after all.

Once Burgess has made up his mind there never was a fellow like him to play the prescribed game, whatever it might be, down to the most meticulous detail without question or reproach, and in this great tragic game in which we were involved he had accepted me as captain.

I went up by the morning train, deposited my document, lunched at the club and was back again at four-thirty, with Burgess on the

platform to meet me—this time with no inconvenient questions. (To Be Continued Next Sunday.) Copyright, 1921, G. F. Putnam's Sons.

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